

# SPAIN IN AMERICA

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**S**PAIN—land of romance and mystery—land of Castilian pride and chivalry—land of the struggle with the dusky Moors—land of the Alhambra, where on moonlight nights the ghosts of the Past return and weave their haunting spell of fascination.

As we rouse from the spell cast upon us by Irving's magic pen, and look at this mysterious land in the cold daylight of historic facts, we sigh again for another of the lost illusions of youth.

Spain—the darkest despotism that has ever disgraced History—spread her blighting shadow over the New World and four centuries of darkness followed. Spain entered the North American Continent in 1512 when Ponce de Leon landed at the Bay of the Cross, a few miles north of the present city of St. Augustine. Seven years later followed her conquest of Mexico and Peru—one long period of cruelty and treachery.

The innocent natives welcomed the fair-skinned Spaniards as gods, and in return were butchered—men, women and children—for the sake of the gold and jewels that enriched their cities. Treasure ships loaded with millions in gold plied back and forth over the Spanish Main between the New World and the Old. The spirit of adventure was at its height and year by year Spain added to her colonies, to her riches, and to her greed for gold.

The white gods—the Spaniards—standing under the banner of the Church would summon a tribe of people to accept the religion of the Church. No word of the long harangue of the priest would the poor

people understand; their silence and wonderment would be accepted as refusal, then would follow the branding of men, women and children to be sold as slaves, or a wholesale massacre as the easiest way of disposing of these heretics.

We look across the seas and there find the secret, hidden source of all this suffering and cruelty. In the great Escorial—that gloomy pile of masonry which was built to house the kings of Spain—there are miles of corridors leading to various wings and sections of the great palace. One narrow corridor led to an inner chapel, and walled in solid stone within this chapel was a small cell. No ray of daylight ever penetrated the gloom. In this cell by a long table sat the King of Spain—cruel, crafty Philip II. Around sat his advisors, all monks, while the flickering candlelight cast added shadows on their cruel faces. Here Philip received his agents, who reported to him conditions in the New World and brought to him the countless sacks of gold. Here he planned the tortures which could add even greater terrors to the Inquisition planted in the New World. Forty-two long years the destinies of the New World were governed from that dark and gloomy cell thousands of miles across the seas.

Philip II at last was called to his account other rulers came and went—years lengthened to decades—decades to centuries—until four centuries had rolled on into eternity, but still never to Spain came the light of reason—the light which might lead her to change her tactics and dispense with the cruelties of the Dark Ages.

The New World, occupying so large a part of the surface of the earth—her coasts washed through countless ages by the two great untraveled seas, her lands peopled by many tribes whose civilization still baffles the student, this New World sitting

so long in darkness, waited for the Light—and when the Light came, lo, it was as a sun red with blood.

To Spain had come through this New World the control of the destinies of half the human race. She had had it in her power to build an empire across the seas equal to Roman Gaul or British India, but her greed and cruelty were the sources of her failure.

"Gold, gold," was her one cry and to this all the people of the New World were victims.

The Spaniards swarmed in Mexico and Peru, then passed over the Rio Grande and settled in various sections in our great Louisiana territory west of the Mississippi, and out to the Pacific Coast. When George Washington was elected President, Spain held part of what is now Alabama and Mississippi and Florida (the great Louisiana territory) and her flag floated where now stands the city of Memphis.

With Spain ever went the Roman Catholic church, and from the Canadian North under the French came also the banner of that same church.

Her priests came with the soldiers, in canoes up the St. Lawrence, marched through the wilderness west of the Alleghanies, everywhere raising the flag of France and the cross of the church. All the land was claimed down to what is now St. Louis. Little Protestant England held only the bleak New England hills, while the power and the pomp of the great church of Rome was spread like a network all over this boundless territory, and the forts of France and Spain seemed destined to hold the whole land for Roman Catholicism.

But how wonderfully God hath brought low the power of the kingdoms of the earth. In His great purpose kingdoms wax and wane, the power of men is but for a day. This great church, mistress of the civilized

world, because unworthy of her trust was shorn of her power—and God's strong right arm wrested the New World from the tyranny of the Old, making her an asylum for the poor and oppressed of all lands.

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